

THE  
Christian's Memorial

For the Exercise of

CHARITY,

Delivered in a

DISCOURSE

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CHRISTIANITY

to the People of

CHRISTIANITY

DISCOURAGED

CHRISTIANITY



General History, Geography, &c.

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### HEB. XIII. 16.

*But to do good, and to communicate,  
forget not, for with such Sacrifices  
God is well pleased.*



**T**HE establishment of the *Hebrews* in the Christian profession is the great design of this epistle. The author of it wisely judged, that their fondness for the law of *Moses* tended to lessen their esteem of Christ, and endanger'd their forsaking of him; that they might avoid suffering for his sake; therefore, having display'd the glory of Christ, and evinc'd the excellency of the Gospel, he proves the insufficiency of legal observances, and disarms persecution of its terror. The Apostle, knowing the importance of these things, touches upon them in the context, though they had been largely insisted upon in the foregoing chapters; an adherence to *Mosaic* rites is represented here not only as unprofitable, but very hurtful. *Mean*, the distinction

on of which was a considerable part of the *Levitical Law*, are said *not to profit those who have been occupied therein*, ver. 9. How unreasonable then must it be in the *Hebrews*, to expect spiritual benefit from such carnal ordinances, as the legal dispensation prescrib'd, when after a long trial they had been found fruitless? In the tenth verse it is declared that those who continued in the service of the tabernacle, did hereby exclude themselves from the privileges of the Christian altar: *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, who serve the tabernacle.* It is written in the 1 Cor. ix. 13. *that those who did wait at the altar, were partakers with the altar.* Certain portions of several sacrifices which were offered upon the altar, were appropriated to the use of *Aaron*, and his sons, and given for their sustenance. Thus true believers, whose entire dependance is upon Christ (of whom the altar was an eminent type) have a peculiar interest in him, and live by him. He has purchas'd their salvation by making himself an offering for their sins: his dying an accursed death for them was typified by the burning of the sin-offerings without the camp, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary; and signified by his suffering, not in the city, a holy place, but without the gate. Should not we then forego all external advantages to cleave unto Christ? The most reproachful sufferings should not move us from him, who has endured so much for our good. Are we treated as the off-scouring of all things for his sake? let us despise the shame, as he did; considering that death will in a little while put an end to all the hardships of this life; and that we shall e're long enter into everlasting rest. This is the import of what we read in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses: *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing*

ing his reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come.

The Apostle, having asserted that Christians have an altar, proceeds to give directions relating to the sacrifices which they shou'd offer: and he begins with the duty which we owe to God, ver. 13. *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* "The provision which God has made of such an altar for us, as his own Son, entitles him to our thanksgivings; let us, in a dependence upon the merit of the Lord Jesus, who can sanctifie our gifts, render unto our heavenly Father unfeigned praise. But we must not rest in acts of piety towards God; it should be our care to perform the duties which are incumbent upon us, with respect to our fellow-creatures." *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* We may observe in these words,

I. The duties enjoyn'd, *to do good, and to communicate.*

II. The manner of their prescription, *forget not.*

III. The enforcement of them, *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* When these parts of the words have been distinctly considered, I shall subjoin an application.

I. The nature of the duties, to which we are here exhorted, deserves some consideration, 1. *To do good*, and 2. *To communicate*; the former is more general, and the latter is more particular.

1. *Well-doing* is required; it is not in the power of all to *communicate*; the circumstances of many are so strait, that they cannot spare any of their sensible enjoyments for the relief of others. But there is no condition so mean and destitute in the world,

world, as to render a person altogether incapable of *doing good*: the most indigent may find opportunities to do good offices for those about them, and by some means or other promote their welfare: though they can do nothing else, yet they may pray for them *to the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift comes*; and that is an instance of well-doing which ought not to be neglected or despis'd.

Such is the condition of men here on earth, that they depend upon one another; and their need of each other's help plainly shews, that none of them came into the world merely to pursue their own particular advantage, that they should consult the common good. If that golden rule of our Saviour was more observed, *As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise\**; a narrow selfish temper would be less prevalent. Where is the man that would not think it reasonable to be assisted by his neighbours when his case requires it? and why should not he endeavour to be useful to them? The goodness of the best of men cannot extend to God; he is infinitely above them; but it is serviceable to the inhabitants of this earth; there are none of them without their wants, and it would be happy for them all, *if every man look'd not on his own things*, so as to disregard the things of others†.

My text does not particularly mention the objects, towards whom our goodness should be exercised. We are elsewhere commanded to imitate the mercy of God, *who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust* ||. Christians are nearly related

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\* Luke vi. 31. † Phil. ii. 4. || Mat. v. 45, 48.

to one another; they are of the same household; therefore it becomes them to have a peculiar concern for each other: the rule of their faith and manners not only allows but requires this; yet are they hereby obliged to be as universally useful as they can, *Gal. vi. 10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* A benevolent temper should dispose us to exert ourselves upon all proper occasions, to promote the temporal and eternal advantage of mankind. All our capacities and talents should be employ'd so as to be subservient to their benefit.

2. We are requir'd to *communicate*; all that are capable of it, ought to do good particularly in this manner. God has thought fit to order that there should be a great variety in the circumstances of men here on earth. We see some possessing a large share of the comforts of life; they have enough, and to spare, while others are straitened, have not a sufficiency of their own for their subsistence. Providence seems to intend, by such a distribution of its blessings, to give an opportunity for the exercise of patience in the necessitous, and of liberality in those that abound: therefore they abuse their plenty, and do what they can to defeat the design of God, who will not impart of their abundance to those that want.

There are some who are not sparing of their labour to help such as are in straits; they take pains to get them supplies, yet how backward are they to hand any to them out of their own substance? they do not content themselves with saying to the hungry and naked, *Be ye fed, be ye clothed*; they'll earnestly plead with others to feed and cloath them, but they must be excus'd from bearing a share of the expensive part of any charity: such a conduct discovers

discovers a covetous temper; though they express some compassion and love to the needy, yet they manifest a greater affection to the good things of time, if they will not part with them for their succour.

I do not know that God has in the Gospel particularly instructed us, what proportion of our estates we are to *communicate* to the poor. We find persons exhorted to do in this case, as God hath prospered them, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. and it is said, that the *Disciples determined to contribute according to their ability, to the relief of their afflicted brethren*, Acts xi. 29. Every one must judge for himself in this matter: how much of our earthly possessions we ought to devote to charitable uses, must be refer'd to our consciences; these may derive sufficient light from the general directions of God's word, to enable us to discharge our duty in this respect. Let none imagine that they only are obliged to *communicate*, who have overflowing estates. Few of the primitive Christians, of whose bounty we read, were rich as to this world; their condition was, for most part, mean, yet they had liberal minds, and their gifts were abundant\*. Not only those who are richly furnish'd with the good things of this earth, ought to give to them that need; but such as get their livelihood by their labour, Eph. iv. 28. *Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*. We should endeavour, by all possible methods, to do good, particularly, by communicating what we can spare of the comforts of this world, to relieve the necessitous.

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\* 2 Cor. viii. 2, 3.

II. Let us consider the manner wherein this is prescribed: to do good, and to communicate, *forget not*. It is observable, that in the second verse of this chapter (where a work of beneficence is enjoyned) the Apostle uses this method of expression, *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers*. And it seems, *First*, to imply a great proneness in men to neglect acts of charity, and *Secondly*, to denote the importance of them.

1. The caution that is apply'd to these duties, seems to intimate a great proneness in men to the neglect of them. The behaviour of most plainly shews, that we need to be caution'd against forgetting to do good, and to communicate. The want of a practical remembrance hereof is too evident.

*How many rest in works of piety?* they think it sufficient that they frequently attend ordinances for divine worship: seeing they perform acts of devotion, and pay their homage to God, they apprehend that all is well with them, however negligent they be of the duties which they owe to men: their consciences are quieted by an appearance of remembring their Creator, tho' they are very unprofitable to their fellow-creatures; but there is no true piety where there is no charity. Is it possible for any to have communion with God, *who is good, and does good*, in the duties of his worship, without some conformity to him in goodness? *As Cornelius was a devout Man, and prayed alway, so he gave much alms to the people; his prayers and his alms are said to come up for a memorial before God, Acts x. 2, 4.* Yet, there are multitudes who act as if they thought that giving the fruit of their lips to God discharg'd them from all obligations, to contribute to the welfare of men. Therefore when the Apostle requires the *Hebrews* to make their offerings to God by Christ, lest they should satisfy

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themselves herewith, he immediately adds this caution, *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not.*

Again, too many are govern'd by self-love, which hinders a just concern for the good of others. The propensity which the God of nature has given us to pursue that which promises happiness, is very necessary and useful; when well regulated, it is advantageous to ourselves, and inclines us to seek one another's benefit. But when the passion of self-love is not kept within due bounds, it is the spring of innumerable evils, and a great obstacle to good works. The Apostle describing a very degenerate state of things, begins the horrid account with saying, *That men shall be lovers of their own selves,* 2 Tim. iii. 2. Ever since the entrance of sin into the world, a contracted selfish spirit has greatly prevail'd: men have been very much dispos'd to suffer their *own things*, to engross their regards; if they are prosperous, how little are they affected with the calamities of others? their fondness for themselves forbids their being at any great pains or expence to help the destitute and distressed. What strangers are they to their own hearts, who are insensible of the inordinate workings of *self-love* in them? Have we not therefore great need of this caution, *Forget not to do good, and to communicate?*

Besides, an immoderate affection to the things of this world, which is too general, very much obstructs the performance of chargeable services. When man departed from God, he gave sensible enjoyments a large share of his heart: the love that was due to his Creator was plac'd upon creatures; and when the blessed Spirit has effectually turn'd his soul towards God, there remains in him a woful tendency to the things of sense, while he continues in the body.

Where is the person on this side Heaven, whose affections are as disengag'd from earthly comforts as they should be? It is the duty, and it ought to be the labour of every Christian, in this imperfect state, to mortify his desires to worldly objects. But how is the conversation of many professors stain'd with covetousness? With what greediness do they follow after earthly riches? How unwilling are they to part with them? Perhaps they'll bestow some cold commendations upon useful undertakings; but they are very averse to be concern'd in them, if expensive. The love of this world, and sinful self-love, have a close connection with one another; therefore the Apostle, in the account which he gives of the ill characters which would be common in bad times, immediately adds the covetous, to that of lovers of their own selves, 2 Tim. iii. 2. And men must mortify their affections to the things of this earth, as well as their love to their own selves, which is not an agreeable work to corrupt nature, otherwise they will not do good, and communicate.

Again, a distrust of providence, to which men are very much inclin'd, straitens their hearts, and slackens their hands in those charitable offices which they should perform for one another. Nothing is more evident than the uncertainty and precariousness of earthly possessions; such as do not rely upon the care of God, are therefore anxious to provide against losses and disappointments; though they enjoy abundance at present, yet they are unwilling to part with superfluities to assist the poor, not knowing how soon they may become necessary to themselves. This is the language of unbelief. As it argues a diffidence of the promises of God, so it directly opposes the injunctions of his word, Pro. iii. 27. *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when*

it is in the power of thine hand to do it. The good that we are here forbidden to withhold from them to whom it is due, does not only signify a just debt; but the succour which we are obliged to afford the indigent by the great law of love, as appears from the next verse, *Say not to thy neighbour, go, and come again, and to morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.* The wise man speaks as if he thought a large distribution of our comforts to those that want, to be a good provision for an evil day, *Eccles. xi. 2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be on the earth.* How contrary is this to the arguings of men's *unbelieving hearts*, which their words and actions plainly declare?

Thus I have represented to you some of the *vicious dispositions* which are predominant in mankind, whereby their *doing good, and communicating* is opposed. From hence arise the various Pleas, which you hear, to excuse their not regarding those cases of charity that are offer'd. As, "that they  
 " are at great charges other ways: their families  
 " are numerous, and they should be worse than  
 " infidels if they did not take care to provide for  
 " them. There are others much more able, and  
 " less burthen'd, than they are: let them do their  
 " duty, and then there will be no great need of  
 " their help." They have also many exceptions to make against the most useful designs. Did you ever know any good work proposed, which could not be supported without expence; against which a cloud of cavils has not been raised? Do not such things evidence persons *disinclination to do good, and to communicate*? which the caution in my text implies.

2. This denotes the *importance* of these duties: if they were not very momentous, and the danger

of forgetting them had not been exceeding great, we had not been so caution'd against it. And it will appear that they deserve the greatest attention, and the most careful performance, if we consider,

1. That they are *in themselves very excellent*. It is God-like to do good, and to communicate. God is the best, as well as the greatest of beings; *how great is his goodness (a)? the earth is full of it (b)*. We read of the *multitude of his tender mercies*; these are *over all his works (c)*. How communicative is the divine Being! what a world of creatures depend upon him, and have their wants supply'd from his bounty! *he satisfieth the desire of every living thing (d)*. What has any creature that he has not received from him? *he giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things (e)*. Nor is he weary of well-doing; *his goodness endureth continually (f)*. Well then may it be said, that *it is blessed to give (g)*. This is to resemble God, who *daily loadeth us with his benefits*. It is the glory and happiness of Heaven, where our nature shall be perfected, to be like our Maker. Should we not then beware *forgetting to do good, and to communicate*? Our readiness herein is a most amiable image of the supreme being.

2. It is highly becoming those who bear the *Christian name, to do good, and to communicate*. They profess to believe in him *who was rich, but became poor, that they thro' his poverty might be made rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9*. And should not they be ready to exercise goodness, towards whom such grace has been express'd? It is the character of him who is their Lord and Master, that *he went about doing*

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(a) Psal. xxxi. 19. (b) Psal. xxxiii. 5. (c) Psal. cxlv. 9.  
 (d) Psal. cxlv. 16. (e) Acts xvii. 25. (f) Psal. lii. 1.  
 (g) Acts xx. 35.

*good*, Acts x. 38. His condition in this world was low and strait; he might say in some respect, as one of his Apostles did, *Silver and gold I have none*. His circumstances are represented by himself as destitute of the accommodations of life; he says, that he *had not where to lay his head*, Mat. viii. 20. Well-disposed persons *ministred unto him of their substance* to supply his wants, Luke viii. 3. It could not therefore be expected that he should communicate a large share of his sensible enjoyments to the necessitous, seeing he himself was so poorly furnish'd with these. But there are many other instances of his great compassion and readiness to help the afflicted upon record. Multitudes were healed by him, and delivered from their maladies: how freely did he impart the best blessings to such as apply'd unto him? Should not the *same mind* that was in him, be in his followers? Is it not highly fitting that they should commiserate the distressed, and dispense such things as they have for their relief? How unlike his disciples do they appear, who do not manifest *bowels of mercy and charity*?

Again, the Gospel dispensation with which *Christians* are favour'd, discovers and exhibits the *riches of divine goodness unto sinners*: the abounding grace of God is herein display'd. The Gospel informs us, that *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. What a glorious instance of his bounty was his *not sparing his own Son*, whom he *delivered up for us*? And how incongruous and unseemly will it be in those who are under an Oeconomy of such grace, to *forget to do good, and to communicate*.

It concerns those who profess Christianity, to cultivate in themselves an evangelical temper. The want of this in the disciples drew a rebuke from  
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our meek Saviour, when the light of the Gospel was but beginning to break out. They were greatly provok'd by an affront that was offer'd to their Master; and they propos'd that he should revenge himself upon the authors of it, by *commanding fire to come down from Heaven to consume them, as Elias did.* But their counsel was by no means pleasing to him: *he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them,* Luke ix. 54, 55. "You do not consider how  
 " unsuitable the Spirit you now discover is to gra-  
 " cious design, upon which I am come into the  
 " world, and the dispensation that I am introduc-  
 " ing." Nothing can be more becoming *Christi-*  
*ans* who enjoy the Gospel of grace, than to be *kind*  
*and good.*

3. Those who profess *godliness* should be careful to do good, and to communicate; for hereby God is glorify'd, as well as the Gospel adorn'd. The glory of God lies very near the hearts of all that are truly pious; than which nothing can be more reasonable. Are they not under the strongest obligations to him? And ought it not to be their highest concern to glorify his name? The Scriptures sufficiently instruct them how this is to be done. They are told herein, that men will be induc'd to glorify their heavenly Father, by *seeing their good works* (a). And they are press'd by this consideration to bring forth much fruit, *John xv. 8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* And there is no fruit more glorious to God than love, gentleness, and goodness; hereby that virtue of his is shewn forth,

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(a) Mat. v. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 12.

in the exercises and displays of which he takes special delight. As God is glorified, so is the Gospel *adorn'd* by the forwardness of those *to do good, and to communicate*, who profess subjection to it. How is this recommended! Is there not a sensible testimony given to its divine original, when it is powerful to work in the minds of men good dispositions, and to make them blessings to all around them? If such effects of the *doctrine of God our Saviour* did more commonly appear, might it not be hoped that they would contribute to spread the belief of it? Surely they would *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

There is hardly any thing has a greater tendency to prejudice men against the Gospel, than a churlish stingy temper in those who pretend a great regard to it. Common people are much inclin'd to judge of religion by the behaviour of its professors, though this very often differs widely from its principles. Therefore the evil conversation of such as would be thought to espouse these principles, is by no means a sure sign that they are not good. Yet, inasmuch as the generality of mankind are so apt to form their notions of persons religious sentiments by what they observe in their lives, it behoves Christians to take care that they avoid whatever may occasion any to think or speak meanly of the Gospel. Are they not beholden to this for many and great privileges? Gratitude then obliges them to have a tender concern for its reputation; and they cannot take a better method to make the *word of life* appear honourable in the eyes of men, than to *hold forth* in their conversation the generous rules which it prescribes. Their self-denial for the good of others, their seeking and laying hold of opportunities

nities to be useful, according to the talents which they have receiv'd, will reflect an honour upon that excellent religion which they profess.

4. The *publick welfare* is interested in our doing good, and communicating; therefore we should beware of forgetting these duties. The Apostle *Paul* gives this as a reason why he instructs *Titus* to press upon believers a patient continuance in well-doing, *Tit. iii. 8. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men.* They are not only profitable to those who are taught to practise good works, but to others. The more extensively beneficial any duties are, the greater is their importance; and a forgetfulness of them is the more culpable. He that sets himself to do good, that freely communicates, is a common blessing; not only because his amiable example may influence those who observe it, to an imitation of him, which will be greatly to their advantage, but upon the account of the refreshment which several receive by the fruits of his goodness. He *disperseth abroad*, and others share with him in his comforts. Learned and good *Dr. Owen* in his exposition of my subject, expresseth himself thus, "The acting of beneficence, as it is the glory of religion, so it is the life, salt, and ligament of human conversation: without which the society of mankind is like that of beasts, yea of devils."

5. Men should be careful not to forget doing good and communicating, because they themselves will be great gainers hereby. That self-love, which hinders the exercise of benignity, is falsely so called. There is a great deal of pleasure in well-doing. A mind rightly turn'd finds more satisfaction by far in communicating and doing good, than in hoarding

hoarding up earthly treasures, or in spending them to gratify sensual appetites. I doubt not but that this is agreeable to the experience of all liberal persons, as it is to the word of God, *Prov. xiv. 14. A good man shall be satisfied from himself.* Acts of kindness are fruit, that will abound to the account of those from whom they proceed, *Phil. iv. 17.* What is parted with to relieve the destitute, is not lost to ourselves: it is lent upon the best security, and it shall be repaid with vast interest, *Prov. xix. 17. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given him will he pay him again.* Deeds of charity are represented by seed that is sown, which springs up, and yields a large increase, *Gal. vi. 9. Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. He that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully, 2 Cor. ix. 6. To do good, and to communicate, are sacrifices well-pleasing unto God, therefore they are highly beneficial to our selves.* Do they not then deserve a close and constant regard? But this leads to the 3<sup>d</sup> thing observ'd in the text; that is, the enforcement of these duties; for *with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* The *Hebrews* had been accusom'd to sacrifices; these were a considerable part of that religion which they formerly profess'd, and to which they still greatly inclin'd. The Apostle therefore, in order to recommend Christian services to them, calls these sacrifices. Nor is this name improperly apply'd to good deeds; for herein we relinquish something which is our property, in obedience to the will of God, and for his sake; as the *Jew* did of old, when his bullock, or his lamb, his wine, or his oyl were offered to the Lord, he gave up and transfer'd to him his right in them.

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Those duties of love which Christians owe to one another, being stil'd *sacrifices*, the respect which God has to these is express'd much in the same manner that his acceptance of the antient offerings is declared. He is said to *smell a savour of rest* therein, or to be *well pleased* with them. But there is in the method of expression here used, a plain intimation, that to *do good, and to communicate*, are in a *special manner* pleasing to God. Such sacrifices are peculiarly agreeable to him, who is *love*, who is *abundant in goodness*: and he has clearly signified his great approbation of these.

What *exceeding great and precious promises* has God made to those who do not *forget to do good, and to communicate*! to enumerate these would take up a great deal of time. Is not he pronounced *blessed, who considereth the poor*? He is not to look for an exemption from troubles, but he shall experience the tender mercy of God under his afflictions, who can and will in due time accomplish his deliverance. So it is promis'd, *Psal. xli. beg.* It is not said in the word of God, "happy is he who is plentifully provided with the good things of time." But he that hath *mercy on the poor*, that hath a *bountiful eye*, is stil'd *blessed* (a). The largest share of creature-comforts cannot secure the owners thereof from want; and the rich are sometimes grievously distressed with the fear of this. How comfortably may they live who are in no danger of lacking? This is the happy case of those who give unto the poor, as the Scripture tells us, *Prov. xxviii. 27. He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack. The liberal soul, who deviseth liberal things shall stand, or be established by them, Isa. xxxii. 8.* God ac-

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(a) Prov. xiv. 21. ch. xii. 9.

quaints the house of Jacob, that the *just* which he had chosen, was to deal their bread to the hungry, to bring the poor that was cast out to their houses, to cover the naked. And to let them know how acceptable the observance of this would be unto him, he adds a most encouraging promise: *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be thy re-reward,* Isa. lviii. 7, 8. Our Saviour assures those who distribute to the needy, that they shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the *just*, Luke xiv. 13, 14. that they shall have treasures in heaven, ch. xviii. 22. It is said, that those who do good, are willing to communicate, lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life, 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. Surely, if doing good, and communicating were not in a peculiar manner pleasing to God, he would not annex hereto these, and a great many more excellent promises.

Pursuant to what he has promised in his word, whose faithfulness cannot fail, we find him giving plain testimonies to his being well pleased with liberality in the course of his providence. It is true that the providence of God is a great deep; very often we know not what he is a doing in this world. It is but a small part of his ways that we are capable at present of surveying; yet we frequently see a remarkable blessing attending the persons and families of the bountiful. They visibly increase, who scatter; and poverty appears to be the issue of withholding more than is meet, Prov. xi. 24. David declares that after a long observation, he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread, Psal. xxxvii. 25. By the righteous he seems to mean the liberal man, as is evident from the following

lowing words, *ver. 26. He is ever merciful, and tender, and his seed is blessed.*

But if God, who is a great sovereign, should not see fit to bestow any sensible distinguishing marks of his approbation upon the merciful in this life, he will not fail openly to declare at the great day, how acceptable their work and labour of love has been to him. In the account that is given us of the proceedings of that day, we are told that special notice will be taken of such sacrifices, *Mat. xxv. 34, 35, 36, 40.* Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Thus, it has been made evidently to appear, that God is well pleas'd with doing good, and communicating. Let us consider the force of this motive to excite us to the discharge of these duties. And, 1. We are in gratitude obliged. 2. Interest should induce us to do those things which are pleasing to God. 1. We are in gratitude obliged to do good, and to communicate, seeing God is well pleas'd with such sacrifices. Is it not an instance of amazing grace and condescension in the Most High, to look down with a favourable eye upon any of our services? We are sinful creatures; and great blemishes cleave to our duties while we are in the body. How far short of the glory of the Lord do we fall in every service? Might he not then justly reject our best offerings with abhorrence? But is he so kind as graciously to accept of that little good which

which we are capable of doing? And shall we refuse to *communicate*? Will not this argue the greatest *disingenuity*?

Again, how numerous and large are the favours which we have received from our Maker! With what patience and long-suffering hath he endur'd us! Notwithstanding our great unfruitfulness, and many provocations, we are yet spared; our space for repentance is prolong'd; we enjoy the means of grace; a great salvation is propos'd unto us. Though we are less than the least of our mercies, yet God giveth unto all of us liberally, and doth not upbraid. How base will it be in us to forget that which is *pleasing* to him, who is continually mindful of us for good! If we have *grateful minds*, (to which all pretend) there cannot be a stronger recommendation of any thing to us, than that it is *acceptable to God*, whose kindness to us has been inexpressibly great and undeserved.

2. It is our *interest to do good, and to communicate, seeing such sacrifices are well-pleasing to God*. What can be of greater moment to us, than to please him, in whose hand is our breath, and whose are all our ways? We are weak frail creatures, expos'd to innumerable evils; it is God only that can cause us to dwell in safety. He is the disposer of all events; without him there is not any thing comes to pass: therefore, if he is for us, who can be against us? The hearts of all men are under his command: God has said, and he will perform it, that when a man's ways please him, his enemies shall be made to be at peace with him, Prov. xvi. 7. He can make all grace to abound towards us, that we may always have all-sufficiency in all things, 2 Cor. ix. 8. In the favour of the Almighty is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life: by him our eternal state is to be determined: he is the Judge of all. Is it

not then of the utmost consequence to please the Lord? Should it not be our constant aim and labour to be accepted of him? 2 Cor. v. 9. And can there be a more forcible consideration to move us to do good, and to communicate, than that such sacrifices are well-pleasing to God? Gratitude and interest are involved herein, and join their influence to persuade us to the discharge of these duties.

Having consider'd the several parts of the text, I proceed to the

#### APPLICATION.

1. Are we requir'd to do good, and to communicate? then it is not enough that we do not defraud and oppress one another. It is to be lamented that the number of the injurious who practise deceit and violence is so great, that we are ready to applaud them as very good, who do no harm. How many trust in themselves that they are righteous, because they are fair and exact in their dealings with men? They flatter themselves that it shall go well with them at the bar of God, forasmuch as none of their neighbours can accuse them of any injustice and extortion.

If we consult the word of God, it will inform us, that it is dangerous resting in negative holiness. Our Lord declares, that every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire, Mat. vii. 19. Though we take honest methods to acquire the riches of this world, and use them with great sobriety, yet, if we go no farther, our account at last will be grievous. He shall be condemn'd to outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, who hides his talent, and is an unprofitable servant, Mat. xxv. 30. God requires us not only to do justly, but to love mercy, Mic. vi. 8. And shall we think it sufficient that we wrong no man, or that we do not spend lavishly upon

upon our lusts what we honestly get? Would we approve ourselves to be real Christians? then let us not forget to do good, and to communicate.

2. Does it so much concern us, that we please God? then let us take care that we do good, and communicate in such a manner as is pleasing unto him. It is possible to perform actions that are materially good, and that have a beneficial tendency, to make large distributions of our comforts to great objects of charity, and yet come short of divine acceptance. God may not be well pleased with our sacrifices; and the cost and labour of them be in a great measure lost as to ourselves. That this may not be your case, I desire you would attend to the following directions.

1. See to it, that your persons be in a state of peace and favour with God, through Christ Jesus: we are guilty creatures. The infinite Majesty of heaven and earth has been offended and dishonour'd by our innumerable violations of his good and holy law. How vain and presumptuous would it be in such worms as we are, to entertain any thought of making atonement by our offerings! Nor can we reasonably expect that our services will be pleasing to God, till our reconciliation be accomplish'd. Those duties only are accounted in the Scriptures as fruit unto God, wherein he takes pleasure, which spring from our union to Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification, Rom. vii. 4. Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be marry'd to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. The sprinkling of our consciences from dead works by the blood of Jesus, is mention'd as that which is necessary in order to our serving the living God, Heb. ix. 14. It is said that the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering, Gen. iv. 4. It behoves

behoves you then to take care that you believe with the heart unto righteousness, receive the atonement which Christ has made, and that you are accepted in the beloved; otherwise your most chargeable sacrifices will not be kindly regarded.

2. Let it be your great care that your nature be renewed; without this, nothing that is truly good, and pleasing to God, can be done by you. The necessity of a great change to be undergone by us, in order to our serving and enjoying God, is expressly asserted in his word. It is too plain that we came into the world with corrupt and depraved minds; and does not our Saviour declare, that the tree must be made good, else the fruit it bears cannot deserve that character? *Mat. xiii. 33.* Are not Christians said to be God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works? *Eph. ii. 10.* Those things which are well-pleasing to God, are spoken of as the fruit of the Spirit, *Gal. v. 22, 23.* It concerns you therefore to be very solicitous that the spirit of Christ dwells in you, that your hearts be furnish'd with a good treasure of gracious habits; so shall you be able to bring forth such things as are really good and acceptable to God.

3. Let your offerings be presented to God in the name of Jesus Christ. What are our best performances? If we compare them with the perfections of God, and our obligations to him, how mean and inconsiderable do they appear! if we examine them by the divine law, what sad defects do we discover in them! when we do good, and communicate, are there not great mixtures of self in our benefactions? Are they not wofully tainted with the vanity and pride of our hearts? Is there not then great need of the merit and intercession of our righteous Advocate, to recommend them to his favour, who is of purer eyes than

to behold iniquity? By him therefore let us offer all our sacrifices unto God. Are we not commanded to do, whatsoever we do in thought or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Col. iii. 17. It is only in the Lord that their labour shall not be in vain, who are always abounding in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

4. Do good and communicate from a principle of love. The Apostle says, though a man should give all his goods to feed the poor, yet without charity, or love it would not profit him, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Though our gifts be very large, and never so well apply'd, yet if we are not acted by a principle of love to God and our fellow-creatures in dispensing of them, they shall not be accepted. When we do good, and communicate, it should be done as unto the Lord; under a sense of our duty and obligations unto him. Our acts of charity should be, as it were, *sacrifices unto God*. We ought to design his glory by them, as well as the benefit of men.

5. Let your communications to these purposes be free, and without grudging; do not secretly wish that you could with decency avoid being concerned in any useful undertaking, that you could ease yourselves of the charge of it without incurring disagreeable imputations. Think not much at what you impart for the carrying on of any good work; let it not be a matter of constraint, for God loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7.

I hope that you will attend to these directions, and that what has been already said will be effectual to prevail upon you to contribute liberally towards the support of that *charity-school* which has continued many years in this place. It is very obvious, that what is given for its maintenance is an instance of *well-doing*. Is it not a great kindness to parents, in mean and low circumstances, to be-  
flow

flow a good education upon their offspring; the burthen whereof they could not bear themselves? And who knows what spiritual advantage those poor families may receive, to which the children belong, by their being taught to read, and instructed in the principles of religion. Can any thing be a greater act of charity to young ones, who are as it were born to poverty, than to endeavour their rescue from those temptations to which they would be expos'd by ignorance and idleness, and to teach them such things as may not only enable them to get an honest livelihood, but *make them wise unto salvation?*

Is not the *publick good* concern'd in having those fitted for useful employments, who might otherwise go uncultivated, and grow up to be burthensome and hurtful to the community? Is it not for the *glory of God* to have such train'd up in the paths of virtue and religion, who would be in great danger of living without God and Christ in the world, if they had no other advantages than what their relatives could, or would afford? The seed that is sown in their tender minds by their reading the Scriptures, and learning that excellent system of Christian doctrines and duties, the Assembly's Catechism, may produce fruits that shall be glorious to God, as well as beneficial to them.

Who needs to be told, that about an hundred children cannot be thus educated (all of whom are furnish'd with Bibles, Testaments, and Catechisms; and some of them are plac'd out apprentices to trades) without considerable expence? And I would hope you will not grudge to bear a part of it, seeing it serves such valuable purposes.

Those liberal persons who have undertaken the management of this charity, are very intent upon enlarging the benefits of it; and their designs and desires are laudable. Let none of you be wanting

in your endeavours to their accomplishment. This *purfery*, through the good hand of God over it, has increas'd; and it deserves special encouragement, being situated in a neighbourhood where there are great numbers of such, whose hard labour can scarcely furnish themselves and families with the necessaries of life; and the Catholic rules laid down and observ'd by its managers should recommend it to every good person. The children of the poor are admitted into it without respect of parties. Think not with yourselves, that you are burthen'd with a vast number of charitable cases, that you are continually reaz'd to give upon some account or other. Pray consider that the Gospel has eased us of great charges, which the *Levitical* dispensation required. The Law of *Moses* made a large provision for the poor, as might be evidently shew'd. Besides, it appointed offerings of earthly enjoyments to be made to the Lord upon various occasions. But we are not enjoyned to take of the best of our flocks, and herds, and give them up to be sacrificed. Surely then, it ill becomes us to complain, as if we were grievously dealt with, in being call'd upon now and then, to *do good, and to communicate*, which are such Gospel sacrifices as are *well-pleasing to God*.

Again, consider that those, to whom this *Exhortation* in my text is more immediately address'd, had a much better pretence than we can have, to a discharge from the performance of costly services. Not long before the writing of this epistle, they were under persecution, whereby they were *spoiled of their goods*, chap. x. 34. and it appears from several passages in it, that they had cause to be apprehensive of fresh troubles from the fury of their enemies: however, they are press'd to *do good, and to communicate*. Blessed be God, we enjoy great

tranquillity, our liberties and properties are secur'd. How inexcusable then shall we be, if our hearts and hands are strait upon such an occasion as is now presented? Your bounty at this time, will be an agreeable *thank-offering* for the mercies of the *last year*, as it will be a likely means to draw down a blessing upon your substance. *Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

F I N I S.





*The State of the CHARITY-SCHOOL  
in Gravel-Lane, Southwark, as it  
now stands Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1725.*



**T**HE Foundation of this School was in the Year 1687. The Number of Scholars at first was forty; afterwards increas'd to fifty, and now to about one hundred. They are taught to read, write, and cypher, and are also instructed in the Assembly's Catechism.

IT may be said to be the first School the Protestant Dissenters were concern'd in.

**H**ERE Objects are received without Distinction of Parties; the general Good being intended. It is situated in the poorest Part about the City; and the Children of the poorest sort of Watermen and Fishermen, &c. are here taught without any Expence to their Parents.

**T**HE Charge has been defrayed by the Gifts and Subscriptions of private Persons; together with an

an annual Collection on New-Year's Day at this School, and one in this City.

The Managers have been enabled to give the Children Bibles, Testaments and Catechisms, and to place some out Apprentices to Trades, and hope by the Continuance of good People's Liberality, to make it an entire Charity.



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